

of any one family seldom remained constant for more than two or three generations.² These conditions accounted for the lack of a permanent ruling caste in China. There were definite ideals in traditional Chinese culture which conditioned the upward and downward mobility of the people within the social hierarchy. 556

B. Social Mobility

1. The family ideal. Large families, especially of the extended type, were the ideal in China.³ However, in practice the ideal was limited by economic means. Primogeniture in China had been done away with long before the Manchu dynasty (1644-1912). Land was divided equally among sons. After successive divisions, individual holdings became infinitesimally small. This contributed to the decline of the economic status of even the wealthiest families, particularly when land was the sole source of income. On the other hand, because of the existence of extended families and the clan structure, less fortunate members of these groups might be helped by relatives to gain a living or an education. A substantial amount of land was usually allotted to the communal family or clan for 596
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2. Martin Yang, A Chinese Village, New York, 1945, p. 132; Francis Hsu, Under the Ancestors' Shadow, New York, Columbia University Press, 1948, p. 4.

3. Consult the study of the Family.

religious, educational, or charity purposes by illustrious members of the family or clan.

Nepotism was simply a projection of the family ideal of mutual help among the members. Clan nepotism often accounted for a man's rise on the social and economic ladder. This practice contributed to the upward movement of poorer segments of the population who otherwise might not have advanced socially and economically in a relatively short period of time.

2. The scholar ideal. Learning was much esteemed, especially when combined with wealth. The prestige of the wealthy was never complete until their wealth was adorned with culture. Indication of respect for learning was common in China, as typified by the saying: "Although your children may be of low intelligence, you as parents should make them study the Classics." The emphasis on learning was buttressed by the imperial examination system, the means by which official positions were obtained, which in turn, was the quickest means to the acquisition of wealth and social prestige in China during peace time. The saying, "After I have studied I will take a government position," was indicative of the usual goal of education. Wealthy families as a matter of course and poorer families at great

4. This stress on learning and cultivation of the Chinese was studied by Max Weber in his Religion of China. Weber goes so far as to conclude that this emphasis caused the lack of capital accumulation necessary for the development of modern capitalism in China.